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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3625
INFO RUEHXK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 1458

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 000432

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/14/2017

TAGS: PGOV PTER PHUM IT EG

SUBJECT: EGYPT: RELEASE OF CLERIC ABU OMAR

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs
William R. Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) An Egyptian MFA official has confirmed that Hassan Mustafa Osama Nasr (aka "Abu Omar") was released from detention on March 11, and is currently at his family home in Alexandria. While MOJ, State Security, and Public Prosecutor personnel refused to comment on the case, Deputy Assistant Foreign Minister for Counter Terrorism Ashraf Mohsen told poloff that Abu Omar was ordered freed by a State Security Court that found his detention "unfounded," because "we had nothing to hold him on." (Note: Upon his initial detention in Egypt in 2003, the imam was charged with belonging to an illegal organization. He was reportedly briefly released in 2004 when the charges were dropped, but was almost immediately detained again without charge, under statutes of Egypt's Emergency Law. End note).

¶2. (C) Abu Omar's lawyer Montasser al-Zayat, an attorney infamous for his theatrical antics and his defense of high-profile Islamists, told journalists on February 12 that Abu Omar wants to sue former Italian PM Silvio Berlusconi for \$13 million in damages. However, according to reports in the Egyptian press, Abu Omar signed a letter upon his release from prison pledging that he would not travel to Italy to testify in Milan court proceedings about his alleged abduction from Italy , and that he promised he will not talk to the media about his case. Abu Omar was quoted in press reports as telling Italy,s ANSA news agency on February 12 that, &I am a wreck of a human being. I cannot speak. I cannot leave the country. I do not want to go to prison again.⁸

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